

GRACE CLASSICAL ACADEMY

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Let us consider...

Celebrating the Senior Class of 2017!

GCA is excited to have nine seniors graduate this year! Traditionally, the final newsletter of the school year highlights each senior and recounts some of their best memories, advice, and stories from their time at GCA. We hope you are edified and encouraged by their testimonies.

Lincoln Amstutz



Lincoln came to GCA in third grade. After graduation, Lincoln will enroll at the Antioch Discipleship School in the United Arab Emirates, just 30 minutes outside Dubai. This is a gap-year program designed to give students the opportunity to study Middle Eastern culture, to disciple and be discipled, and to minister to individuals in the UAE. After the program, Lincoln says he will “continue to pray to see if God would want me to attend MSU or OTC after returning to the States.”

Lincoln is grateful for the foundation he has received at GCA. He said, “The experience I am most grateful for at Grace is the opportunity to learn from such dedicated, godly teachers. I know for a fact that without the influence and connection to some of my teachers at Grace Classical, my relationship with God would not be what it is today. They have helped show me what it means to glorify God in every part of my life and to see His hand at work in every subject and area of life. Following this, if I could give one piece of advice to the next wave of GCA students, it would be to lose their lives on this earth and gain them in eternity. For too much of my junior high and high school

The mission of Grace Classical Academy is to provide an education designed to help our children know the love, grace, truth and holiness of our glorious God and from this understanding, strive for excellence in knowledge, wisdom and service.

continued on pg. 2

Inside Katanomen:



Matt Vandiver



Tori Umlauf



Allie Vernon



Christina Burks



Lincoln Amstutz



Ty Smith



Livi Tolbert



Rachel Bulger



Anna Mercer

career, I was preparing for my future, my plans, and what I was going to do with my life. But, it wasn't until this year that God clearly showed me that there is nothing in this world that will satisfy or come close to the love of Jesus Christ and living for Him. He is worth our whole life, and I would urge every student at GCA to practice denying themselves of their worldly desires and that which will be lost, and seek after the treasures of Christ, which will be saved for eternity.”

Lincoln, we are all proud of the man you have become, your work ethic, and your sincerity to follow Christ. Blessings on your future endeavors!

Rachel Bulger



Rachel started at GCA her junior year. She intends to study at MSU and major in Special Education, with a minor in American Sign Language. She says, “In ten years, I see myself on mission, teaching sign language in foreign countries, or working with special needs orphanages in poverty-stricken areas. I would also like to have a family and settle down, so we'll just have to wait and see what God has in mind.”

When asked about what she is most grateful for from her time at GCA, she responded, “I'm most grateful for the deep classroom discussions in my Apologetics and Ethics classes. The topics discussed caused me to question why I believe what I believe rather than skimming the surface of important issues. The questions of theology and spirituality brought me to strengthen my beliefs and sometimes even change them. I now have a stronger belief system rather than a list of things I believe just because my church or family affirms them. My faith really became my own in those classes, and I'm grateful for that. The best example of this came after the death of my older sister, and a subsequent class discussion about salvation and heaven. These discussions turned the truth of heaven as the believer's eternal home from something I believed because it had been taught to me into something I believed because I had lived it, experienced it, and studied it for myself. I am grateful for these types of discussions in class at GCA.

Rachel also said that the person who has most impacted her is Mr. Bradley: “I love his widespread knowledge. Some people devote their whole lives to one topic, but Mr. Bradley is wise about many subjects. Whether he is talking about history, literature, or Japanese pop music, you can see that he is a researched man with incredible intellect. Something he has told our class will stick with me forever, ‘I strive to be a Biblicist, rather than a Democrat or a Republican. I go back to Scripture on every societal issue, because it holds the key to every door. The Bible has all the answers we will ever need.’”

Rachel, it has been a joy to have you in class. May God bless your future, and may you always walk within His will.

Christina Burks

Christina began at GCA her sophomore year. As far as her next steps, she says, “After graduating, I plan on attending OTC next fall and spring to complete all of my general education courses. Then I plan on transferring to SAGU (Southwest Assemblies of God University) just outside of Dallas, Texas, in the fall of 2018. There, I hope to get a bachelor's degree in Pre-Professional Counseling and then a master's degree in Professional Counseling. In ten years, I hope to be a counselor, working with teenage girls with life-controlling issues (such as depression, anxiety, abuse, self-harm, unplanned pregnancies, addictions, suicidal tendencies, and human trafficking). My dream job is to be an in-home counselor at Mercy Multiplied, a nonprofit Christian residential home for girls ages 13-28 with life-controlling issues. There are seven of these homes, both in the U.S. and nationally. There's one in New Zealand, and I would love to work there!



One of Christina's favorite memories is from her Outdoor Education class during her junior

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year. “In an Outdoor Education field trip last year, we went up to St. Louis to go skiing. Well, I’m just going to say it...I was terrible. I cannot ski for the life of me. At one point, Rachel [Bulger] and I were going down a hill (it was actually the practice hill, so I don’t know if it should even count). As we were going down, I think I said something like, ‘I don’t know what I’m doing!’ and she yelled back, ‘Just glide!’ As soon as she said that, I fell straight down and face-planted in the snow. That’s the best ‘gliding’ I did on the trip.”

We asked Christina what she would tell herself if she could talk to the 7th grade version of her, and then for advice for current GCA students. Her counsel is excellent:

“Well I was a pretty messed up 7th grader. I thought I was the coolest kid around and always had to be the center of attention. That cost me a lot of friendships. So I felt really alone, and I constantly sought the approval of others. Also, I can’t lie: I was pretty boy-crazy, which did not help. So if I could go back and talk to 7th grade Christina, I would tell her: 1) You don’t need to seek the approval of others—you are who you are because of Christ. Your worth is not found in how others see you or what they tell you. Your worth is found in Christ and Christ alone. Someone’s opinion of you could never change that. 2) Friendship is not a one-way thing; it’s not all about you and what you can get out of the relationship. You can’t just expect everyone to love you and want to hang out with you if all you’re worried about is yourself and what you can get out of the friendship. If you want a good friend, you have to be a good friend. Proverbs 18:1 says, ‘An unfriendly person pursues selfish ends.’ If you’re simply seeking friendship for what you can get out of it, you’re not a good friend. You have to give just as much as you receive, if not more (whether that be by gifts, words of affirmation, time, or anything else). 3) You don’t need a boyfriend when you’re 12 years old. 4) Do everything you can to get the most out of your experience at GCA. If you’re at Grace, you’re in an amazing place. The people are truly some of the best people around—teachers and students. Go into every day with your eyes wide open, ready to absorb whatever you can. I know that’s hard to do at 8:00 on a Monday morning, but I promise it’s worth it.”

Christina, may you forever root your counsel in the wisdom of God. Enjoy your next steps, and we will miss you!

Anna Mercer



Anna started attending GCA in the kindergarten class of 2004. About her future, she says, “I will be attending Truman State University in Kirksville, Missouri, this fall. I plan to double major in communications and political science, and after college, I will pursue a political speech-writing career. Although I do not know where these studies will take me—I don’t know what kind of job I’ll have or what country I’ll be living in—I do see one definitive part of my future: I will be following God’s will for my life. I know for certain that I’ll make mistakes, and I’m sure I will often fail to see the reasons behind my trials and tribulations, whatever they may be. However, I can rest in the fact that God is omniscient, and His plan is more perfect than any future I could create for myself.”

One of Anna’s most embarrassing moments came from Chemistry during her junior year. “We were studying one of the myriad complex lessons, and I decided I needed to ask a question. I wanted to ask Dr. Sellers for help, but I struggled to phrase the question in a comprehensible manner. She attempted to help me explain my thoughts, but I knew the correct wording was hiding somewhere in my brain, if I could just have a moment to think out loud. Something in my clouded mind told me that it was a good idea to interrupt Dr. Sellers and retort, “I’m going to talk for a minute if that’s okay.” Dr. Sellers interpreted this as command to silence herself, and correspondingly slammed herself against the wall in fake shock. I still get teased regularly by my classmates about the time I told Dr. Sellers to stop talking. I will forever maintain my innocence, but I suppose that I will never quite live it down. Apparently, I’m more of a troublemaker than I thought.”

One truth Anna has realized, and would tell future GCA 7th graders, is the importance of having your own identity. “I would tell future students that it is more-than-okay to have your own interests. Just because a certain song or hobby or book or TV show is popular doesn’t mean you have to like it in order to have friends. Actually, the best friends are the ones who love you for your individuality. I think that the idea of ‘fitting in’ grows less and less important the older you get...Oh, and I’d tell myself to pay better attention in geography class. That stuff is important.”

Anna, you have worked hard and shown great discipline in your time at GCA. It will be exciting to see what God has next for you. Keep up the good work, and blessings upon your future!

Ty Smith

Ty has attended GCA since 4th grade. But, his favorite story is from 10th grade physics, with Mr. Moss: “One day during physics class, Mr. Moss challenged our class. He asked if anyone would be willing to hit him over the head with a wooden yard stick. He went to Lincoln and put the yardstick in his hand. Lincoln kind of stuttered for a second, then handed the yardstick back to him. Mr. Moss challenged us again, ‘No one has it in them to do it!’ Matt thought he would do it, so he asked for the yardstick. He put it on Mr. Moss’ head, but never swung. Mr. Moss chuckled and then looked at me. I said I would do it; but, I was more concerned with getting in trouble than anything, yet Mr. Moss said I wouldn’t be in trouble. So I swung—and stopped just short of his head. He didn’t move. He really wanted me to hit him! So, I did. I raised the yardstick back until it touched my calf and swung downward as fast as I could, striking Mr. Moss on the head. He was stunned. (I’m assuming from the physical blow, but I’m guessing there was a mental blow too.) He finally said, ‘You just hit me over the head!’ I said, ‘You wanted me to!’ Before I made the decision to do this, I thought this entire situation was a physics example. On one of the first days of the year he had all of us lay down; then, he put a stump on our chests and hit it with a mallet. A physics truth made it not hurt. I assumed the yardstick was the same. But there was no physics lesson here; it was just an object lesson gone wrong.”



Ty will enroll at JRLC (James River Leadership College) after graduation. He hopes to be in ministry throughout his life, although not necessarily as a pastor. One individual who has shaped Ty is Mr. Cymbaluk. “Mr. C taught me to think differently. He always challenged me toward truth. He was different, but he knew the Scriptures and could lead people in a way I’ve never seen.”

Ty has always been a student that gave every ounce of effort he had, and he has the same advice for other GCA students: “Give it 100%; that is, give what you can. God is honored when you give all that you have. It doesn’t matter if it is ordinary or extraordinary. When you give 100%, you end up getting 100% back.”

Ty, you are a man of a million ideas and hard work. Go change the world.

Livi Tolbert

Although Livi began at GCA her kindergarten year, she has been a part of the GCA community her entire life. She recounts that one of her best memories about GCA is before she was even a student! “Before I attended GCA, Anna [Mercer] and I used to come in whenever we were in preschool. Our siblings were already in school at Grace and our moms were the lunch ladies, so we would sit in the back and eat our lunch from our matching lunchboxes (hers

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was pink, mine was purple!) A lot of my life events circulate around the friends I made at Grace. I think that's the most beautiful part about the school for me: from spending summer days at the Williams' pool with the Steelmans and Mercers, to dinner with the Vandivers, to going to Nicaragua for a missions trip with high school classmates. There's not much in my life that doesn't have its connection to Grace...I'm grateful that I've been able to call Grace my second home, because it truly always was and is. I know I wouldn't be who I am today without GCA. ”

Livi is looking forward to the future. She intends to complete a gap-year missions program, and then enroll at Evangel University: “I have received an invitation to serve with missionaries in Istanbul, Turkey, and I could not be more excited! Everything about the Turkish culture intrigues me, and I know I will grow a lot as I will be out of my comfort zone. Afterwards, I will most likely go to Evangel. Right now I'm having a hard time deciding what degree I want to get (there are too many good ones to choose from!) but I will probably choose a career as a scientist or go into the ministry/non-profit field.”

In ten years, Livi has no idea what her life will look like but knows that God will shape it. She stated, “I could see myself taking many paths and I am still praying for direction. I am sure that I want to help people through my career: whether that's helping them as a dietitian, through ministry, or working in a microbiology lab. Also, for as long as I can remember I've always wanted to be a mother. I don't see many more jobs in the world as important as raising kids to love God with everything that they have. As one of my friends put it, ‘I really only want to raise up warriors for God.’ I could see myself as a strong, independent woman traveling the globe, a stay-at-home mother with 10 kids, or trying to balance both work and mothering. I would love all of these paths and I'm really excited to see where God leads me!

Livi, it is clear that you are grateful for GCA, but know that we—all the teachers and staff—are grateful to have had you for these last 13 years! Blessings to you for your future!

Tori Umlauf

Tori started at GCA in 5th Grade. She will be attending John Brown University in the fall. She intends not only to enroll in some art and illustration courses but also in whatever else interests her at the moment. Tori is a bit of a free spirit, and it can be seen when we asked her about where she sees herself in 10 years: “Goals for 10 years from now are fine to have, but I've never been that kind of person. Maybe things will work out, maybe they won't. You can't throw a wrench in my plans, because I don't really have any.”

Tori also has a bit of advice for current GCA students: “Don't be afraid to be interested in weird, dumb things. Everything is weird and dumb to someone; the fact that you like it is great and I guarantee someone else loves it too.

Tori, you are an amazing artist and a creative soul. It was always wonderful to hear your insight, questions, and thoughts in class. May God continue to sharpen you and use you for His glory.



“If you're simply seeking friendship for what you can get out of it, you're not a good friend. You have to give just as much as you receive, if not more.”

Matt Vandiver

Matt has been a part of GCA his entire life. He began at GCA when he was in preschool. As far as his next steps, he says, “I will be joining the Army National Guard this summer and then attending College of the Ozarks next spring and participate in the Advanced ROTC program. I will do my basic training for the National Guard sometime between now and then.

Some of Matt’s best memories are from GCA: “I would have to start at the very beginning. In preschool, at the old GCA building, I had to use the restroom, and our class was outside for recess. I asked my teacher if I could go use the bathroom and she responded, ‘Yes dear, just use the sidewalk and then go inside.’ Well, growing up in the country, the only direction I heard was ‘use the sidewalk,’ so naturally I *used the sidewalk*. I surprised my teacher that day and from then on, I knew I had potential.”

“Some of my other fond memories include ripping my pants about twenty times. (I don’t understand why they don’t make rip proof pants.) Also, there was only one day I was not friends with Ty. One day in 5th grade, he wanted to play Robin Hood and I wanted to play dodgeball. The very next day we both forgot about it completely—not on purpose, but that was my childhood. Another memory I still laugh about is from a 5th grade field trip. I don’t remember the field trip, but I remember the car ride home. I guess we were talking really loud or something, and it was enough to make the driver (a mother of a kid in my class) tell us to sit still and not make another peep. Well, we all then decided to find out who can go ‘peep’ the loudest without her noticing. Of course, she heard every ‘peep’ and was not pleased...I have had a wonderful time at GCA and, now that I am looking back, I can’t seem to find any bad memories, only happy ones that I love to reminisce about.”

If Matt could travel in time and counsel his 7th grade self, he stated, “I would tell myself to stop trying to get attention from the girls because, buddy, it just isn’t worth it. Also, I would tell myself to keep up with my Bible reading because it turns out that’s more important than any class. And I would also tell 7th grade me to keep my little red Civic when I get it. Man, I still get upset that I got rid of that beauty.”

When it comes to staff who have had an impact on Matt, no one has had a greater impact on his life than Mr. V. “I would say my Grandad impacted me the most during my time at GCA. He was always there to make sure I was doing right by God and by my teachers. I would spend plenty of quality time with him on the farm, and that time has impacted me the most during my childhood. Grandad taught me about having a good work ethic and how it can get you far in life. I love my Grandad so much and I am glad I spent so many days with him at school and on the farm.”

Matt, it has been incredible to see you grow up, goof off, mature, and have childlike joy at the same time. May you continue to love the life God has given you, and may He bless you and keep you.

Allie Vernon

Allie has been a part of GCA since 1st grade. In the fall, she will be attending Mizzou, where she intends to involve herself in as many campus organizations, collegiate ministries, and freshman councils as she can, while being in the honors college and studying International Business and Psychology.

During her junior year, a 3-week trip to Nepal sparked Allie’s interest in international studies. She says the trip “forced me to grow up, be aware of my surroundings, and have emergency plans in place. I went with my dad, and

“Give it 100%; that is, give what you can. God is honored when you give all that you have. It doesn’t matter if it is ordinary or extraordinary. When you give 100 %, you end up getting a 100% back.”

we were hiking to the base of Mt. Everest—a 70 mile hike, round trip. I had to be prepared in case something happened to my dad, like an injury during the hike.” Allie also recounted how the trip allowed her to meet really genuine and interesting people, many of whom needed the Lord, but were still an encouraging community.

Allie also has advice for her 7th grade self: “I would tell 7th grade me that having a phone or having a lot of social media is really not as important as it seems. It just becomes a chore to keep up with and it makes it easier to compare yourself to others. It is too easy to get caught up with how good another person is at a hobby, or how pretty she looks, the number of likes one receives, and whether a certain person even acknowledges something you posted on social media. I still find myself deleting social media apps today because of this. They are just not that important. I would also say that whenever school gets really tough (especially around sophomore or junior year), don’t forget to relax and spend time with your family. It will alleviate your stress level—even if you have to schedule the free time!”



Allie has also appreciated the teaching of Mr. Bradley. “I have enjoyed all of his courses, from American History to Guitar. He has helped shape my understanding of our country and the intention of the founders through the Constitution, and I am thankful for his classes.”

Allie, may you continue to walk with the Lord and follow His guidance, whether in the states or overseas. Enjoy your studies, and we will miss you!

A Note from Mr. Moss

GCA Family,

It has once again been an incredible year. God has shown grace and favor on this school in so many ways! Whether through finances, friendships, or opportunities to grow, He has proven faithful moment by moment, day after day—what an amazing God we serve!

Please continue to pray for wisdom throughout this summer in the decisions that need to be made and the projects that need to be completed. I have already had many volunteers to help as needed throughout the summer, and the spirit of excitement over owning the building is contagious. Please thank God for His provision, and pray blessings on those that have helped to make this a reality. It has been incredible to watch events unfold on God’s timetable.

Thank you for allowing me to be a part of your children’s lives, and thank you for making the sacrifice to send your children to this school! May we be focused on what He wants us to do, and may we seek to join Him in all He is doing as He gives us the eyes to see, the ears to hear, and the hands to do His work.

Have a blessed summer!

Jedidiah Moss



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June 2017

1 Tuition Due

1-2 Office Closed

5-9 4th-8th Grade Drama Camp, 9:00-12:00

9 Drama Camp Performance, 11:00 AM

12-16 1st-5th Grade Art Camp, 9:00-11:00;
6th-8th Grade Sewing Camp, 9:00-12:00;
6th-12th Grade Art Camp, 1:00-3:00;
9th-12th Grade Programming Camp, 9:00-12:00, 1:00-4:00

15 Mrs. McDowell's Birthday

16 Mrs. Morris' Birthday

18 Father's Day

July 2017

1 Tuition Due

3-4 Independence Day—Office Closed

13 Mrs. Cymbaluk's Birthday

21 Anna Mercer's Birthday

August 2017

1 Tuition Due

1-8 Teacher Training

7 Orientation, 6:00 PM

9 First Day of School

17 Evening Prayer for GCA, 7:00 PM

25 Camo Day